



OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT
TODD DIACON



Dear Members of the Kent State University Community,

I am writing today to provide an update on the field hockey incident that occurred on our campus last month. The Office of Compliance, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action at Kent State has completed an internal investigation into the Sept. 7 decision to stop the Temple University-University of Maine field hockey match from moving into double overtime. [View the report here.](#)

First and foremost, we are grateful that the investigation found no Title IX violations or gender-related bias. It was noted that a similar scheduling situation occurred in 2016, and in that case, the field hockey match continued, and fireworks for football were canceled. The current case involved new and different personnel and has provided an important opportunity to assess and improve our procedures and communication.

The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics is conducting a full review of home scheduling to identify potential conflicts and to ensure conflicts are resolved and communication with visiting teams is clear and complete. The department will continue to consider the implications of the report and take action as needed to keep the university's core values and commitment to students at the forefront in decision-making.

Going beyond the scope of this incident, we will take these additional steps:

- We deeply regret the negative impact of the match cancellation upon the Temple University and University of Maine field hockey teams. I have reached out to both presidents with the offer to reimburse reasonable and customary costs for their teams to play a make-up match this year, if possible.
- Beginning this fall, the university's Intercollegiate Athletics Equity and Diversity Committee will conduct a self-study on gender equity in athletics. Under President Lester Lefton, the university voluntarily committed to conduct this self-study at five-year intervals when the NCAA removed its requirement for a self-study every 10 years. The last such review was completed in 2014.
- We will administer a climate study of student-athletes and departmental staff.
- During 2019-20, we will take stock of our progress toward The Game Plan, the university's highly ambitious strategic plan for athletics, now in its final year. We will involve our stakeholders as we chart our course for Intercollegiate Athletics over the next few years. Among Game Plan highlights, for example, was the establishment of women's lacrosse, now in its second year of competition.

I would like to thank Pam Fitzgerald, director of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, Americans With Disabilities Act/504 coordinator and interim Title IX coordinator, for her prompt action to ensure a complete and independent review of the field hockey match cancellation. The investigation was thorough and provided a clear and factual account of the factors and communications leading up to the decision.

Beyond the negative impact upon the visiting teams directly involved, we are sorry this incident has reflected poorly on the proud tradition of academic and competitive excellence in women's athletics at Kent State. Our female student-athletes, alumni, community supporters and coaches have established Kent State as one of the top women's athletic programs in the Mid-American Conference (MAC) and the nation. In the past six years alone, Kent State was the only two-time winner of — as well as a two-time runner-up for — the MAC's Jacoby Trophy for overall excellence in women's athletics. During this time, our women's teams won 23 MAC regular season and tournament championships and, among other achievements, brought home a national championship in the shot put, advanced to the second round of the NCAA championship in field hockey and finished fifth in the NCAA championship for women's golf. Mirroring their competitiveness on the playing field, our female student-athletes posted a stellar 3.53 GPA during the 2018-19 academic year.

The actions we are taking will not only ensure that an incident like this does not occur again, but most importantly, will make all student-athletes — our Golden Flashes and visitors alike — feel supported and treated with respect, kindness and purpose in everything we do.

Sincerely,

Todd Diacon
President